

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 011706

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SUBJECT: PLAYBOY ARTICLE ON DRUG ENFORCEMENT

1. FEBRUARY PLAYBOY CONTAINS LENGTHY ARTICLE BY FRANK BROWNING ON DEA ENTITLED "AN AMERICAN GESTAPO." FOLLOWING ARE PERTINENT EXTRACTS CONCERNING MEXICO AND COLOMBIA:

QUOTE. CALIFORNIA CONGRESSMAN FORTNEY "PETE" STARK HAS HELD HEARINGS TO DEMAND U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATIONS OF COMPLAINTS FROM MORE THAN 300 AMERICANS HELD IN MEXICO, MANY OF WHOM CLAIM THEY WERE INTERROGATED AND BEATEN IN THE PRESENCE OF AMERICAN AGENTS. NO ONE ELSE'S STORY HAS EQUALED MARK SORELLI'S HOWEVER.

TO PROTECT HIS LIFE AND MANY OTHER PEOPLE STILL IN MEXICO, MARK WOULD NOT ALLOW HIS REAL NAME TO BE USED IN THIS ARTICLE. WHETHER HE IS GUILTY OR INNOCENT OF SELLING MARIJUANA IS NOT THE POINT OF HIS STORY. HE SWEARS HE UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 011706

HAS NEVER DEALT IN DRUGS AND THAT, IN FACT, AMERICAN MEXICAN AGENTS TORTURED HIM ONLY TO EXTRACT STATEMENTS ABOUT HIS FRIENDS IN THE MEXICAN MOUNTAINS, WHERE BOTH MARIJUANA AND OPIUM POPPIES ARE GROWN. EVEN

LOCATING THE TOWN WHERE HE WAS HELD COULD IMPERIL SOME

OF THOSE FRIENDS, HE SAYS. IF HE CAN CLEAR HIS NAME,
HE EXPECTS TO RETURN TO MEXICO.

MARK'S STORY BEGINS IN A PALE-COLORED WINNEBAGO CAMPER ABOUT DUSK ONE DAY IN THE SUMMER OF 1974. HE AND SEVERAL OTHERS HAD BEEN ARRESTED BY MEXICAN POLICE IN A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE AND WERE BEING DRIVEN OVER BACK-COUNTRY ROADS TO A LARGER TOWN, WHERE THEY WOULD BE INTERROGATED. AS THE CAMPER PULLED IN PAST THE ELEGANT WROUGHT-IRON GATES OF A LARGE, COMFORTABLE SUBURBAN HOUSE, MARK SPOTTED A HANDFUL OF U.S. AGENTS WAITING THERE. THE HOUSE INCLUDED QUARTERS FOR SEVERAL SERVANTS AND THE BEDROOMS HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO OFFICES FOR THE MEXICAN SOLDIERS WHO WOULD STAND GUARD OVER HIM AND HIS FRIENDS. BOTH THE U.S. AND THE MEXICAN SECRET POLICE STAYED IN A DELUXE HOTEL NOT FAR AWAY, RETURNING EACH MORNING TO BEGIN THEIR WORK. THE FIRST EVENING, AS MARK AND HIS FRIENDS WERE PULLED FROM THE CAMPER, THEY WERE MARCHED OVER TO A LARGE PILE OF MARIJUANA AND PHOTOGRAPHED. THEN MARK WAS SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS AND TAKEN INTO A PRIVATE ROOM.

THEY HAD ME LYING ON THE FLOOR AT THIS TIME, HE SAYS, AND THE AMERICAN AGENTS WERE IN FULL COMMAND, TAKING NAMES, IDENTIFICATION, WALLETS, EVERYTHING. IT WAS JUST GETTING DARK AND THE AMERICANS MADE A POINT OF SAYING THEY WERE GOING "OUT TO LUNCH." THEY RETURNED ABOUT

11 P.M.

I HAD TO LAY FLAT ON MY BACK AND I COULDN'T TALK OR RAISE MY LEGS, MARK SAYS. HE IS A BIG MAN, TOUGH, WELL INTO HIS 30S. MORE THAN ONCE AS HE SPOKE, HE PAUSED, TO STOP FROM BREAKING DOWN AS HE RECREATED THE TINY DETAILS OF HIS ORDEAL. THEN THEY PROCEEDED WITH UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 011706

THE TORTURE.

"ABOUT SIX WERE AMERICAN AND THEN FOUR MEXICANS CAME IN. THEY ASKED ME TO UNDRESS AND THEY TOOK ALL MY CLOTHES AWAY. THEY PUT A PLASTIC PONCHO LINER UNDER-NEATH ME. I HAD TO STAND ON TOP OF IT.

TWO OF THEM HELD ME AND THEY STARTED OUT SIMPLY BY SLAPPING AND INTIMIDATING ME. THEY ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS I HAD NO ANSWER FOR, AND I TOLD THEM SO. THEN THEY PROCEEDED TO GET ROUGHER.

THEY MADE ME STAND ON TIPTOES, BENT AT THE KNEES, LEAN-

ING WAY BACK. ONE LITTLE MEXICAN GUY STARTED WORKING ON MY SOLAR PLEXUS WHILE A GUY IN BACK, EVERY TIME I WOULD BEND DOWN, WOULD RAM A RIFLE BUTT IN MY BACK.

THE AMERICANS WERE SIMPLY ASKING THE QUESTIONS AT THIS TIME. THEY THOUGHT I WAS SOME KIND OF A KINGPIN AND THEY WANTED ANSWERS TO ALL SORTS OF ABSURD QUESTIONS. SO AFTER THEY GOT ENOUGH SWEAT ON THE PLASTIC LINER ON THE FLOOR, THEY LAID ME DOWN ON IT. SWEAT - LITERALLY A GALLON OF IT. THIS IS A TWO-HOUR DURATION AND IT GETS PRETTY PAINFUL AFTER A WHILE. THE AMERICANS

JOINED IN.

I CAN REMEMBER A SPECIFIC AMERICAN AGENT KICKING ME IN THE BALLS. VERY SPECIFICALLY. WHEN I TOLD HIM THAT WHAT HE WAS DOING WAS CRAZY, HE WALKED STRAIGHT UP WHILE

I WAS IN THIS WEIRD POSITION WITH THE TWO GUYS HOLDING MY ARMS AND KICKED ME RIGHT IN THE BALLS, STRAIGHT ON. BY THIS TIME, I COULD HEAR THE GUY IN THE OTHER ROOM SCREAMING BLOODY MURDER. I MEAN HE WAS JUST SCREAMING AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS. AND THEY SAID THAT THIS IS WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME. THEY SAID THEY WANTED ME TO GIVE A FULL CONFESSION AND THEY TOLD ME ALL THE THINGS THEY KNEW I'D DONE, WHICH WAS PREPOSTEROUS. I TOLD THEM THEY WERE MISTAKEN AND THAT I WAS NOT SIGNING ANYTHING.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 011706

THEY LAID ME DOWN ON THE SWEATING PLASTIC AND PLUGGED THIS THING INTO THE WALL AND STOOD ON MY HAIR -- I HAD LONG HAIR.

TEN OF THEM HELD ME BY MY LEGS, ARMS AND BOTH SIDES OF MY HAIR AND HELD A RAG OVER MY MOUTH. THEN THEY TOOK THE WIRES...

THE AMERICANS WERE THE HONCHOS THAT WERE GIVEN SOME STRANGE REVERENCE. THE MEXICANS WERE NOTHING BUT NITPICK THIEVES. THEY ASKED ME IF I KNEW WHAT IT WAS AND THEY MADE IT SPARK. I COULD SEE (THE WIRES) BETWEEN MY LEGS. THE WIRE WENT RIGHT STRAIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE OF MY LEGS AND WAS PLUGGED INTO THE WALL. IT WAS FAR ENOUGH TO REACH PROBABLY MY BELLY BUTTON BUT NO FARTHER.

SEE THE THING SPARK, THEY SAID. YOU'RE LYING IN WATER AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS. THEY TOUCHED ME WITH IT ON MY LEG AND IT SHOCKED -- RIGHT ABOVE MY KNEE, JUST TO SHOW ME THAT IT WAS ALIVE AND WELL. IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO KNOCK ME OUT, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH TO PUT YOUR

BODY IN RIGORS. THEN THEY STARTED ASKING ME QUESTIONS
LIKE, "ARE YOU GOING TO TALK?"

WELL, THEY KEPT THAT UP UNTIL I WASN'T EVEN THERE ANYMORE,
I MEAN, YOU CAN ONLY GO SO LONG. YOU CAN'T TAKE IT;
IT GETS YOU SICK. THAT WHOLE PERIOD THERE LASTED ABOUT
THREE HOURS WITH ALL THE BEATING INVOLVED.

THE WORST WAS YET TO COME. I MEAN, THE ELECTRICITY
YOU CAN LIVE THROUGH. YOU DON'T THINK YOU CAN LIVE
THROUGH IT, BUT WHEN THEY TAKE IT AWAY, YOUR BODY
IS JUST SO PLEASED THAT YOU CAN LIVE THROUGH IT AND
ARE WILLING TO TELL THEM ANYTHING. THEY PUT THE SHOCK
TO MY BALLS AND HELD IT THERE UNTIL I CONVULSED AND JUST
COULDN'T DO ANYTHING MORE. YOU GET TO THE POINT WHERE
YOU CAN HARDLY EVEN TALK.

THEN THEY SAID I'D BETTER THINK ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE.
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 011706

THEY WALKED OFF AND LET ME THERE AND I COULDN'T EVEN
MOVE. I WAS JUST LYING THERE ON THE FLOOR. I DIDN'T
NEED A GUARD, I COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN UP IF I HAD TO.

THE AMERICAN AGENTS HAD LEFT HIM WHILE HIS FRIEND IN
THE NEXT ROOM STILL SCREAMED. BY THEN, IT WAS THREE
A.M.

THEN THEY CAME IN WITH A REAL WINGDING. THEY SAID THE
OTHER GUY HAD CONFESSED. I TOLD THEM I DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT HE COULD HAVE CONFESSED -- HE CAN CONFESS ABOUT
HIMSELF, BUT HE CAN'T CONFESS ABOUT ME, BECAUSE I
HAVEN'T DONE A GODDAMNED THING. SO THEN THEY SAID,
'OK, PARTNER,'" YOU ASKED FOR IT.'

THEY GOT THIS DUCT TAPE. THEN THEY HELD MY HEAD AND
TAPED MY MOUTH SHUT. I SAW WHAT THEY WERE GOING TO DO
AND IT WAS SOMETHING I'D ALWAYS BEEN AFRAID OF --
DROWNING. THEY HELD MY HEAD BACK. ONE GUY HAD MY
HAIR AND ANOTHER GUY FORCED MY HEAD BACK AND KEPT HIS
HAND OVER THE TAPE SO I COULDN'T BREATHE AND THEY POURED
WATER AND SODA POP DOWN MY NOSE. THEY WERE ALL TRYING
TO HOLD ME, BECAUSE I WAS FIGHTING LIKE HELL. THEY
POURED THAT DOWN MY NOSE AND I'LL TELL YOU, THAT IS

THE ONE THAT GOT ME. THEY DO THAT UNTIL YOU CAN'T
STRUGGLE ANYMORE. YOU'RE DROWNING. YOU'RE TRYING
TO COUGH AND YOU CAN'T.

THEY POURED THAT DOWN MY NOSE AND THEY FUCKED WITH ME
FOR ABOUT THREE BOTTLES' WORTH BUT ONLY GOT ABOUT ONE
BOTTLE'S WORTH DOWN. I WAS STRUGGLING AND THEN I WAS

UNCONSCIOUS."

MARK WAS HELD NINE MORE DAYS. AS THE DAYS BORE ON, THE AMERICANS TOOK A GREATER HAND IN HIS TORTURE, SHUCKING THEIR INTERROGATOR ROLES TO PHYSICALLY TAKE CONTROL OF THE ELECTRODES AND THE CATTLE PRODS THEMSELVES.

DEA ADMINISTRATORS DENY THAT THEIR AGENTS HAVE EVER USED UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 011706

TORTURE OR ANY OTHER ILLEGAL TACTICS IN THEIR RAIDS. YET A FOUR-MONTH SERIES OF DIPLOMATIC CABLES -- SOME OF THEM SIGNED BY SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER -- LEAVES NO DOUBTS ABOUT DEA'S BEHAVIOR ABROAD. AT A MEETING OF DEA REGIONAL DIRECTORS IN MEXICO CITY IN THE FALL OF 1974, AGENTS WERE SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED NOT TO MENTION TORTURES AND INTERROGATIONS IN THEIR TELETYPE MESSAGES, BECAUSE CABLE SECURITY COULD NOT BE

GUARANTEED. BY EARLY JANUARY 1975, A HANDFUL OF AMERICAN AMBASSADORS WERE COMPLAINING DIRECTLY TO WASHINGTON ABOUT DEA'S GESTAPO OPERATIONS. AND BY JANUARY 21, HENRY KISSINGER HAD SENT A LONG CABLE TO 80 FOREIGN MISSIONS DECLARING IN THE FIRMEST DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE THAT DEA AGENTS WERE NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY FURTHER NARCOTICS RAIDS AND INTERROGATIONS WITHOUT SPECIFIC AMBASSADORIAL APPROVAL. LIKE THE CIA, DEA AGENTS WERE A VIRTUAL FREE FORCE ABROAD, ATTACHING THEMSELVES TO FOREIGN POLICE UNITS AS CLANDESTINE SQUADS OF SHARPSHOOTERS AND ADVISORS WHO WOULD DISAPPEAR INSTANTLY AND ANONYMOUSLY AS SOON AS AN OPERATION WAS COMPLETE.

A DEA-DIRECTED OPERATION IN COLOMBIA TOOK THAT COUNTRY'S CUSTOMS OFFICIALS AGAINST THEIR OWN MILITARY ORDERS UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS ABOARD AN AIRPLANE THAT WAS LATER CAUGHT IN AN HOURLONG CROSS FIRE FROM COLOMBIAN SECRET POLICE. THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA REPORTED IN A CABLE ADDRESSED TO KISSINGER AND TO DEA THAT THE INCIDENT HAD RAISED COLOMBIAN "HACKLES UP TO THE PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL." HE ADDED THAT "TO OPERATE IN THE SAME MANNER AS BEFORE...WOULD PLACE IN JEOPARDY" THE

ENTIRE DEA PROGRAM IN COLOMBIA. SO EXTREME HAD THE SITUATION BECOME IN MEXICO THAT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR THERE HAD TO ISSUE A "GUIDE-LINES" CABLE IN APRIL 1975 ORDERING DEA AGENTS NOT TO BECOME ANY FURTHER INVOLVED IN KIDNAPING "VIOLATORS" TO THE UNITED STATES. EARLIER, IN FEBRUARY, THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR MET MEXICO'S ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR BREAKFAST TO DISCUSS A DEA REQUEST FOR 31 MORE AGENTS IN MEXICO. AFTER BRIEF CHITCHAT

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 07 STATE 011706

IN WHICH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID CIA OPERATIONS SEEMED TO BE HIS BIGGEST PREOCCUPATION, HE TOLD THE U.S. DIPLOMAT HE "WAS NOT AT EASE WITH WHAT HE INTERPRETED AS A 'WATCHDOG' ROLE FOR DEA AGENTS", ACCORDING TO A CABLE REPORT OF THE MEETING. CONFIRMING WHAT DEA DENIES, THE MEXICAN ATTORNEY GENERAL "BROUGHT UP THE MATTER OF DEA AGENTS OPERATING IN HIGH MOUNTAINS AND AT FORWARD BASES," COMPLAINING TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT THIS WAS A "MISALLOCATION OF U.S. RESOURCES." "HE SAID THEIR PRESENCE WAS TOO OBVIOUS IN THE MOUNTAINS AND COULD CAUSE POLITICAL TROUBLE."

THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT DEA'S EXECUTIVES PREFER NOT TO PURSUE MAFIA DRUG TRAFFICKERS. IT COMES FROM A DEA AGENT WHOSE NAME CANNOT BE USED: A TEAM OF INTELLIGENCE SPECIALISTS WORKING AT DEA HEADQUARTERS IN THE WINTER OF 1974 DISCOVERED A SURPRISING REPORT THAT SHOWED CHICAGO-OFFICE TELEPHONE TOLL CALLS FROM A SMALL CHICAGO GROCER AND CONVICTED HEROIN DEALER TO A SAN DIEGO WAREHOUSE OPERATOR WHO HAS BEEN KNOWN FOR MANY YEARS AS A FENCE. THE SAN DIEGO OPERATOR HAD APPEARED ON THE PERIPHERY OF SEVERAL ORGANIZED-CRIME INVESTIGATIONS, BUT HE HAD SO FAR ESCAPED INDICTMENT. HE HAD EVEN TOLD ONE UNDERCOVER AGENT THAT THE WAREHOUSE BUSINESS WAS A SCAM FOR HIS REAL BUSINESS AS A FENCE FOR STOLEN GOODS GOING SOUTH -- CARS, JEWELRY, TVS, LIQUOR -- AND HIS DRUG BUSINESS GOING NORTH. AFTER MONTHS OF CAREFULLY COMPILING OLD AND NEW POLICE REPORTS FROM A HALF DOZEN CITIES, THE INTELLIGENCE AGENTS WERE NEARLY READY TO GO TO A GRAND JURY ASKING INDICTMENTS ON "A MAJOR NARCOTICS OPERATION BETWEEN NEW YORK, CHICAGO, LAS VEGAS, SAN DIEGO AND TIJUANA INVOLVING SOME VERY PROMINENT CRIMINALS." INCLUDED WAS A LAS VEGAS ASSOCIATE OF JOSEPH COLOMBO.

BY APRIL 1974, THE INTELLIGENCE TEAM HAD PREPARED ELABORATE FLIP CHARTS DESCRIBING THE NARCOTICS OPERATION

AND ITS PRINCIPALS. THE CHARTS WERE TO BE USED AS A PRESENTATION FOR THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING OF TOP
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 08 STATE 011706

DEA MANAGEMENT. THE INTELLIGENCE TEAM WAS "UP," CONFIDENT OVER THE WORK ALREADY DONE AND EAGER TO PROCEED WITH THE LAST REMAINING BITS OF THE INVESTIGATION. THEY COMPLETED THEIR PRESENTATION IN DEA'S CONFERENCE ROOM AND SAT DOWN, ANXIOUS FOR WHAT THEY WERE SURE WOULD

BE SUPPORTIVE SUGGESTIONS FROM THE BRASS -- AND MAYBE
EVEN A COMMENDATION.

INSTEAD, BEFORE HE HAD COMPLETELY GOTTEN TO HIS FEET,
THE AGENT IN CHARGE BARKED OUT A SHARP DOZEN WORDS OR
SO AND ORDERED THE PROJECT DROPPED. "HE INFORMED US
THAT HE DIDN'T WANT US WASTING OUR TIME ON ORGANIZED-
CRIME PROBES, THAT THE REAL PROBLEM WAS THE MEXICANS
AND WE WERE TO DROP THIS. WE WERE TO WORK WITH
MEXICAN VIOLATORS AND THEIR EXTENSIONS ABROAD. CAN YOU
BELIEVE IT? FUCKING WETBACKS': ONE AGENT WHO RECEIVED
A REPORT OF THE MEETING SAID.

CERTAIN THAT THE AGENT IN CHARGE HAD MISUNDERSTOOD THEIR
PRESENTATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE, ONE OF THE
INTELLIGENCE SPECIALISTS STARTED TO EXPLAIN THE CHARTS
ANEW.

"DROP IT" THE SENIOR AGENT YELLED AT HIM. "FORGET IT.
I DON'T WANT ANY MORE TIME SPENT ON THIS. WORK THE

MEXICANS."

SO ENDED THE SECOND MAJOR DEA INVESTIGATION IN 18 MONTHS
ON INTERSTATE MAFIA NARCOTICS TRAFFIC. THE MEMBERS OF
THE INTELLIGENCE TEAM RETREATED TO THEIR OFFICES AND
PREPARED A FINAL WRITTEN REPORT TO THE INTELLIGENCE
CHIEF. AS ONE AGENT SAID, "IT NEVER LEFT
INTELLIGENCE. IT WAS JUST BURIED." END QUOTE. KISSINGER

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